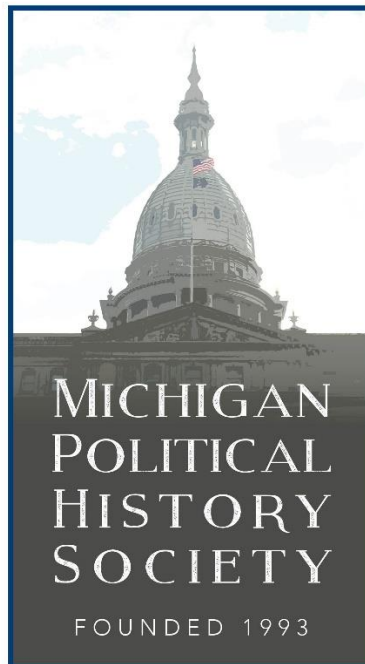


# **Dennis Archer**

Interviewed by  
Lynn Jondahl

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Lynn Jondahl: Hello. My name is Lynn Jondahl, and I'm here on behalf of the Michigan Political History Society. I'm here to talk with the honorable Dennis Archer. Justice Archer has served on the Michigan Supreme Court, he has been Mayor of the City of Detroit, and he's been a key figure in Michigan political history since the 1960s. Thank you, Justice Archer for giving us this time today. I'm looking forward to the conversation with you, pleased to be here.

Dennis Archer: Thank you.

Lynn Jondahl: And here we are sitting in your office in Detroit.

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Lynn Jondahl: And I think you were born in Detroit, right?

Dennis Archer: I was born in Detroit. I lived here for five years. And then I went to my parents to Cassopolis, Michigan: that's C. A. S. S. O. P. O. L. I. S., population of 1500.

Lynn Jondahl: 1500. How old were you then?

Dennis Archer: Five. And I started the first grade in Cassopolis. And when I graduated from high school, I came back to the city of Detroit to live with my grandmother while I started Wayne State University. And ultimately, left Wayne State University and went to Western Michigan University where I graduated. And that's, sort of, been the first part of the academic endeavors.

Lynn Jondahl: What took your family to Cassopolis?

Dennis Archer: My mother brought me here because there was no hospital in Cassopolis. And I was born in the city of Detroit, lived here for five years, and I went back to Cassopolis. Conceived in Cassopolis, born in Detroit, and went back to grow up in Cassopolis.

Lynn Jondahl: Okay. And then went back to Western after starting out here? I say back, Cassopolis...

Dennis Archer: Well, they're very close, that is to say, for those who are not familiar with Cassopolis. It's about 24 miles from South Bend, Indiana, 14 miles from Niles, four miles from Vandalia, 37 from Three Rivers and about 50 some from Kalamazoo: it's in that pocket.

Lynn Jondahl: So, if I were talking today to people who knew your family in Cassopolis, or knew you at Western, or knew you later in law school or as a teacher, would I

be talking to a bunch of people who are amazed and surprised at what you have done?

Dennis Archer: I think so, because I frankly had no idea what I was going to do when I was growing up in Cassopolis. Fact of the matter in the first five years, as you might imagine, a youngster loving to play and enjoying himself with peers and others, used to hate to take a bath. When I went to Cassopolis, we didn't have any running water. And so, I took a bath in a metal tub every Saturday night, and we couldn't get a glass of water when you go to the faucet, et cetera. And so, you can also imagine the follow-up that is to say that there was no indoor facility, so we had a honey pot for the nighttime and outdoor facilities for during the day whether it happens to be 90 degrees or 40 below wind chill factor.

Lynn Jondahl: You lived there essentially all the way from kindergarten to high school?

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Lynn Jondahl: Came here then for your high school, here being Detroit, for your high school or when you started law school or undergraduate school, I believe.

Dennis Archer: That's right. I did. And my dad had a third grade education. He lost his arm just above his left elbow in a car accident before I was born. My mother had a high school diploma. Neither one had ever stepped foot on a college campus. But they made it very clear to me when I was growing up, that I was going to go to college. They couldn't tell me where to go, they couldn't suggest what college I ought to go to, what I want to do, or want to dream about becoming as a professional, but I was going to go to college. And so, I started working when I was eight years old. My first job was a Caddy on the golf course, Park Shore, nine hole golf course at the time, now it's up to 27 holes, I believe.

Lynn Jondahl: Have you played it since?

Dennis Archer: Oh, yes. I set pins in a bowling alley before it shut down and then worked in a bakery, worked for a interior decorator who used to be a tremendous artist, but put his art into metal. His name was Edwin Johnson, and I went to school with his son Winston, and then I started working for Winston's dad just as I was almost ready to graduate. After I graduated, I lied about my age to work in a furniture factory in Cassopolis, and they found out, more or less than a month, that I was too young, and they probably did the right thing, they fired me. And I came back to Detroit to start Wayne State University, but I needed money to be able to go to college, so I started working for a real estate company, and then from a real estate company working for them, I was painting houses. And if you can remember, think about oil based paint in the summer and painting closets and getting up on ladders and painting on the eavestrough, et cetera, paint coming down your arm et cetera, went through all of that.

Dennis Archer: My first white collar job was working after college, you know, go to college during the day and then in the evening, I worked about three four hours at Henry Ford hospital for the medical records department. When I started Wayne State University, I went in to see a counselor, counselor said, "What do you want to be?" I did not have a clue. I mean, my parents didn't suggest, "I want you to do this, I want you to think about that." But I was impressed with the pharmacist who's drug store I was working for being a stock boy. And so, I said I want to be a pharmacist. Well, the school system, Cassopolis, was a class C school, a class C school means it's a smaller school in size than a Class A school which Lansing, Sexton had all of the larger schools around the state or in Detroit would be Class A, class C school was small. The only thing we did in chemistry was to make oxygen. So, I said pharmacy, and it didn't take, about a year and a half for me and pharmacy not to agree.

Dennis Archer: So, I ventured off and took a short step to Detroit Institute of Technology. And it dawned on me with a degree in arts and sciences, I couldn't imagine what job I would have with that kind of degree. So, I went up to Western Michigan University, and first time I've ever lived away from home, and stayed in the only dorm that did not serve food, it's called Vandercook hall. That's where a lot the athletes stayed and the like, we affectionately referred to it as hungry Hall. And I went over to see a counselor and he said, "What do you want to do?" Well, by that time I'd met some friends who were teachers and I was impressed with their infatuation with the profession, the excitement that they had in working with their students, so I said: "I'd like be a high school history teacher." He said: "I'd like for you to think about it because we've got so many high school history teachers in our state today that you would be lucky to be able to be hired in a junior high setting to teach history. Why don't you think about it?" I said, "Okay."

Dennis Archer: I went back to the dorm and my roommate was not there but he had a stack of letters like that from school districts from all the over the state, so I asked around the dorm and said, "My roommate is George Waters, he's got all of these letters, so what's his major?" Said he's special education, and was special education for the educable mentally retarded. Today we refer to our students as learning disabled. So, I asked more about it, and the more I asked, the more I became excited about it, so I went back to see the counselor. And then I got into that program and just took off and I really enjoyed it. So, I graduated from Western Michigan University, came back to Detroit and started teaching in our Detroit Public Schools.

Lynn Jondahl: In Special Ed?

Dennis Archer: In Special Ed.

Lynn Jondahl: That would have been, then just shortly after Michigan adapted Special Education Legislation, am I recalling correctly? And I hear the story that the advocates, parents and so on of Special Ed students, wanted assurance of a program which the legislature enacted but didn't fund and so they had to come

back and petition that. So I'm just suggesting you are on in early days of those curriculum development for Special Ed.

Dennis Archer: I can't tell you that I remember, all I know that I wanted to teach, I was happy to graduate from Western Michigan University, and the thought of making some real money was something that was, sort of, preeminent in my mind and working with young people rather than the history which gave rise to it. I graduated in 1965 from Western Michigan University, so I don't know the timing of all of that. I was at Bunche Elementary.

Lynn Jondahl: In Detroit?

Dennis Archer: In Detroit and the principal Violet Vardy,, suggested that the way I work with students and the way I work with my fellow teachers, that in her view, I have the makings of being a very fine principal. And in order for me to be able to move in that direction, I would have to get a master's degree in education, so I started down at the Rackham Building at the University of Michigan's off campus, to start taking two courses to move towards getting a master's degree. And ironically, the first two classes that I took, I found that I was using the same two textbooks that I used as an undergraduate at Western Michigan University. And so, I was dating this teacher at the time and I started complaining, some might say whining, about taking the classes, and I wasn't frankly learning anything new, nothing new by way of thoughts, strategy, rationale, et cetera. And the more I complained, she started saying, "Why don't you go to law school?" And I just said, "Look, I've never been to a lawyer's office, I don't know what lawyers do, I don't have a clue what they do." And I would say, "no," she would say, "You ought to think about it." And I thought about it, and I took the LSAT exam. And the score suggested that if I went to law school and worked hard I can graduate from law school, and so, I went to law school.

Lynn Jondahl: Then all the way through your undergraduate and your professional education graduate program, you were working at the same time in a full time job.

Dennis Archer: I worked part time when I was at Wayne State, I worked part time when I was at Detroit Institute of Technology. When I transferred up to Western Michigan University, I worked part time there too. I was washing pots and pans in a dorm that allowed us to eat at the meal that we were serving. So I worked at the dinner meal washing pots and pans and on Sundays because it was, they really, sort of, didn't need you, there'd be a group of us who lived in Vandercook who went to Walgreens downtown, and they had a brunch, all you can eat, and so, we all saved up to make sure that we can go down there and eat. And as we finished, we, sort of, loaded up our plates again with things that we could put in a napkin that wouldn't cause grease stains in our pockets and the like and apples or whatever they might have so that I would have a little something later for the day.

Lynn Jondahl: Now, up to this point, and you didn't go to law school with the idea this was access to politics or a political career, that was not on your agenda?

Dennis Archer: I just knew that a law degree would offer me an opportunity to help people. When I was growing up we didn't have a television in our home until I think I was a sophomore or junior in high school. I mean, our entertainment growing up was listening to the radio. What I'm saying or I'm talking about my Dad, Mom and I, because I'm the only child, couldn't afford anybody but me, but we'd listen to The Shadow and Green Hornet and all the shows that we just enjoyed listening to. And when we got a television, in Cassopolis we could pick up the South Bend stations, we could pick up one or two Chicago stations and WKZO in Kalamazoo which was, I think, channel three at the time. And as I was able to watch television, I remember watching on the news this thing called civil rights movement and the marches and the like. I graduated from high school in 1959. I didn't know the significance of it, I just knew that Brown versus the Board of Education was passed by a unanimous Supreme Court in 1954.

Dennis Archer: I didn't follow or know enough about the 1955 decision where the court was entertaining arguments from the lawyers as to how quickly they should implement their 1954 ruling, of course, they came out with, with all deliberate speed. Many of us thought that means it was going to be very quick, only turned out to be very slow, and that was the intent of that decision. And in 1955, I knew that there was a woman who would not get up out of her seat on a bus and that Rosa Parks was that person. And the civil rights or the bus boycott movement was led by a new minister in town, having been chosen by E. B. Nixon by the name of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. I think at the time, was just Reverend Martin Luther King and he picked up his doctorate later. Those vague kinds of things, and remembering the Edmund Pettus Bridge and things like that, but it didn't dawn on me in terms of what the power and majesty of a lawyer or lawyers could do to help change society until I was well into law school.

Dennis Archer: I taught during the day and I went to law school at night. And so, as opposed to graduating in three years, if you go full time, I graduated in four years. And we had a significant number of black law students who were all attending the Detroit College of Law. There were only maybe one or two that were going during the day, most all of us went at night. And like me, and number were teachers, some were probation officers, some worked in other jobs, but we went to law school at night. And it wasn't until being in law school, that I began to have an appreciation for what lawyers could do. The first legal job I had was at the law firm of Keith, Conyers, Brown, Baltimore & Anderson. The Keith was Damon Keith, and the Conyers was Nathan Conyers, Mike Wahls, and Joe Brown and Herman Anderson and Joe Baltimore. And that was a summer of 1967.

Dennis Archer: I just gotten married on June 17th, and my father in law, I went by to pick him up, we went to go play golf as we would do a lot together, and when we came back, we saw a lot of smoke. Couldn't figure out what the heck was going on, and it was near his house because they lived at, I think, 1642 Longfellow. And so, I dropped him off, still couldn't figure out what was going on. Got in the car and drove downtown, my wife and I were living in Central Park Plaza apartments down here between Lafayette and Larned, and got home and found

out that there was a riot in place that it started as a result of the police going in to break up a blind pig or after hours joint however you wish to call it. And it was a much larger crowd than they thought, and then they had called a couple of paddy wagons, et cetera, and then it just erupted. I say all that to suggest that as a result there were literally thousands of people over the course of several days who were put behind a fence, I think, out on Belle Isle. I never went to see it, but I knew it was someplace and I think it was on Belle Isle.

Dennis Archer: And the judges called out for all lawyers to please come in and be of help because people were being detained and lawyers could, whether you had a practice in criminal law or not, lawyers we're trained enough to be able to cause a person to be taken before a judge, and being advised what they're charged with, asking for bond, and many people were dismissed or there were no one there to make a charge, so case dismissed. Some were charged with disorderly person or whatever they might have been charged with. Well the Keith law firm because of their experiences were knee deep in it, and I saw them render service for people who needed help, who couldn't speak for themselves. That made a very big impression upon me.

Dennis Archer: And then a summer or so later, Don Campbell who taught contracts at Detroit College Of Law, asked me to come up to his office and he said that Detroit College of Law had been contacted by Ford Motor Company in the office of general counsel and Ford Motor Company wanted to let it be known or make a statement that they were open to everybody who wanted to come in to be a lawyer for Ford Motor Company. As a result, wanted to make sure that they had some law students of color.

Lynn Jondahl: Can you remind me the year we're talking about?

Dennis Archer: That will either be 68 or 69.

Lynn Jondahl: Just prior to your graduation.

Dennis Archer: I graduated in January of 70. So, I went there and was there for a summer, fabulous opportunity, I learned a lot. Dee Allen Glenn, from the University of Michigan was another person of color who worked there for the summer. He helped me with my writing skills because I just needed the help, and he was kind enough to do that. And when he first started, all I saw was red on the paper, and when we finished, hardly any red on the paper. And then when I graduated in 1970, just before I graduated, I sent a letter into a very large law firm, and I asked for an opportunity to be interviewed. Before I went, I went to Martindale Hubbell to find out who this person was that was going to be interviewing me, and the like and I went in to see him. He thanked me for coming in, and wanted me to know that the law firm did not hire law students from the Detroit College Of Law. I said, "Thank you very much." All of which I found to be interesting because he graduated from the Detroit College Of Law.

Dennis Archer: But as I reflected upon it and asked around a bit more, I found that when I graduated in 1970, I don't think there was a large law firm in the city of Detroit, if not state that had a person of color as an associate or as a partner. So, I joined the law firm of Greg and Gardner, Sam Gardner and Bobby Greg. And both of which went on to become judges. Sam Gardner, I ran his campaign for Detroit Recorder's Court.

Lynn Jondahl: Was that your first campaign?

Dennis Archer: No. Get to that in a half second. And then the other was, Jay Robert Greg was appointed to Probate Court by the Governor. My first initiation into politics came when my father in law and I were playing golf. We were playing at Palmer Park and happened to run into Harry Farlow. Before that I'd heard a lot about Robert Millendar because he, like my father, was in the army and they served in Italy. And my father in law was very impressed with Robert Millendar. Robert Millendar was in the only integrated law firm at that time, at least that I knew of, and so, I wanted to see if I can impress him with the fact that if I were willing to work hard in a campaign, I might be willing to work hard in a law firm. And thus I might have a job after I finish. In the summer of 1969 I began to work as a volunteer because I lived downtown, I think the office is not too far from Lafayette Park. And I began doing everything that I was asked to do from, at the time, we had mimeograph machines and we would have flyers, 8 x 11, that talked about our candidate, Richard Austin, and we would go out to shopping centers and other places and stick them on the windshields, et cetera.

Lynn Jondahl: Was that Austin's first race?

Dennis Archer: That's Austin's first race for mayor. At the time he was CPA.

Lynn Jondahl: That was?

Dennis Archer: That was in 1969.

Lynn Jondahl: Okay.

Dennis Archer: And so we worked hard on the campaign and I graduated to being head of the advance team. And I would go, as you know, ahead of the candidate and when the candidate, Richard Austin, would come, I would tell him how many people were in the room, if there was somebody giving other candidates a hard time. I'd tell him where that person was situated and the like. And then I left to go to the next place.

Dennis Archer: We watched the election returns in what is now the Book Cadillac downtown. And it was raining, it was cold, and we lost a very close election to Roman Gribbs, who at the time was a sheriff.

Lynn Jondahl: Yes, he had been sheriff, or was sheriff at that time.



Dennis Archer: Was sheriff.

Lynn Jondahl: Running from that position.

Dennis Archer: And he was successful.

Dennis Archer: Right after that election, of course, I did not get the job with Bob Mellinger's law firm. But the next year, and I was working for Greg and Gardner, and also left Greg and Gardner after about six months and the four of us, Elliot Hall, Horace Stone, Alex Allen and myself started our own law firm. So the two associates, four associates, left the two partners, started our own law firm.

Dennis Archer: And then Bob called and said, "Guys, I've got some challenges with my circulation in my leg. We've got a Democratic convention, state Democratic convention, in Grand Rapids." It was at the Pantlind. "And I'd like for you to go up and be my eyes and ears and I want you to walk and be around Richard Austin. I want you to report in to me every day." Which I did, because you might remember Secretary of State O'Hare had decided he was not gonna run again. And so Bob wisely thought that if Richard Austin could get the nomination, he could win and become Secretary of State, which was a first, I think, in the nation.

Dennis Archer: And so I went up and my first time going to a Democratic state convention and I saw what they met in the smoke filled rooms because I was in there with him late at night and watched him get the nomination, which I reported back to Bob Mellinger. And then after he successfully got the nomination, I came back to Detroit, I was asked to help with Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties.

Lynn Jondahl: In the Austin campaign?

Dennis Archer: In the Austin campaign.

Dennis Archer: And then as the race started to tighten up, it was then Wayne County and then it was the city of Detroit, all at the direction of Bob Mellinger. And we were very fortunate that Richard Austin won.

Dennis Archer: Bob Mellinger was an outstanding and brilliant political strategist. And it was just a thrill to work at his direction. And also had a chance to meet another young lawyer at that time by the name of Jim Blanchard. And in and around about that time he was starting or getting ready to help or was involved with Frank Kelley.

Lynn Jondahl: This is Frank Kelley as Attorney General at the time?

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Lynn Jondahl: And Blanchard would have been recently out of law school himself, right?

Dennis Archer: I would guess that'd be about right.

Dennis Archer: And he was helping Attorney General Frank Kelley, his campaign, as I was helping Dick Austin. And the two of them, Kelley and Austin, I mean, you couldn't find people who got to be closer and friends and how people just got along with each other.

Dennis Archer: I'd never flown in an airplane before, especially one of those small airplanes where you can only put four people, oh my goodness. We were traveling around the state. We were coming home one time and I looked out my window and out of the cloud bank I could see by City Airport, that very tall tower, whatever was out, looked like a furnace. I saw it and my eyes got big. I was happy to be on the ground when we landed.

Dennis Archer: But he went on as Frank did, they both won the election that year. That was my first real victory in sense of it.

Lynn Jondahl: Were you essentially a staff person?

Dennis Archer: I was a volunteer.

Lynn Jondahl: A volunteer?

Dennis Archer: A volunteer. And happy to do it.

Dennis Archer: And the more I saw how politics worked and it really helped to win because I lost the first campaign we were in. I just started enjoying politics. And so I would continue to help folks who were running for office that I liked. And I enjoyed it. Still do.

Lynn Jondahl: And you're still very active in it?

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Lynn Jondahl: Do I hear correctly that you were cutting some new inroads or involved in that with the Austin campaign, first African American running as Secretary of State, you were confronting racial realities in both going to law school, where you could go or feel comfortable, as well as where you could work. Reflect on that as, you know, the cutting edge issues of race at that time.

Dennis Archer: What impressed me the most during that time, despite all of the challenges that the lawyers whose shoulders I stood on, the indignities that they had to deal with. That nevertheless these were some of the most successful lawyers that you will ever want to find and as I looked and met with them, we started when we were at the Detroit College of Law, we started the Wolverine Bar Law Student Association and then when we graduated, we got involved with the Wolverine Bar Association as lawyers.

Lynn Jondahl: The Wolverine Bar Association being organized black or African American attorneys, not welcome in the Michigan Bar and American Bar or was there tension there?

Dennis Archer: The American Bar had a long history of discriminatory practices. The American Bar Association would not allow lawyers of color to be members. Back in 1908, a lawyer and former dean at Howard's Law School, J. Clay Smith, prolific writer, anyway, J. Clay Smith wrote about how three then colored lawyers were found to be members of the ABA. When the ABA found out about it, similarly had put them out and then changed the application so that if you wanted to join the American Bar, you had to list your ethnicity.

Lynn Jondahl: When was this?

Dennis Archer: 1908.

Dennis Archer: And so any time that somebody wanted to join the American Bar and if members of the legal community did not know that person, they would go to the law office of that person to look at them to make sure that they were not a person of color. That changed in 1943 when they changed their application and I believe that the first person of color to join the American Bar was William Coleman who was clerking then for Mr. Justice Felix Frankfurter who insisted, urged and made him join the American Bar Association. And then others around the country, unknown to me who they were, started to join.

Dennis Archer: And so when I was in law school, I joined the law student division because I wanted to find out more about what lawyers did. So I was in the Wolverine Bar Law Student section and I was in the law student division of the ABA, trying to find out as much as I could.

Dennis Archer: Donald Campbell, the professor I mentioned earlier, before I graduated from law school, just as I was ready to graduate, asked me to come by his office and he said, "Dennis, what I've observed is that we've had some very bright and talented law students here. But after they graduate, what I see and observe is that it's a natural inclination that they gravitate to the black bar." In this case, the Wolverine Bar. "And I would urge you to consider doing both. I would urge you to consider being involved in the white bar or the Detroit Bar Association, State Bar of Michigan. And the way you can distinguish yourself, because we've got about 17,000 lawyers-" We've got about 42,000 now I think, "You gotta think about writing from time to time."

Dennis Archer: So I thanked him for his advice, properly joined the Wolverine Bar Association, and met John Krsul, who was a lawyer here at Dickinson Wright . And John Krsul got me involved with the judicial qualifications committee of the Detroit Bar Association and got involved with the young lawyers section of the Detroit Bar Association. Now it's called Barristers, but then it was the young lawyers.

Lynn Jondahl: The judicial qualifications, you would be reviewing candidates for judicial positions?

Dennis Archer: Who were seeking to be elected to whether the Supreme Court, circuit court, common pleas court at the time, et cetera.

Dennis Archer: And I really enjoyed it. And the politics of it all and the like. I really enjoyed it. So John got me involved there and I ran for chair, became chair of the Detroit young lawyers section. And then I got involved and I became a member of a counsel of the young lawyers section of the State Bar of Michigan. Went on to become president of the Wolverine Bar and today you've got black bars all across the state. Lansing, in Ann Arbor, Flint, Grand Rapids, you know. I mean, statewide, you've got a number of different black bar associations. So things have evolved.

Lynn Jondahl: You eventually became the first African American to head the Michigan and the American Bar Association?

Dennis Archer: I think I was the 50th president of the State Bar of Michigan. I was president from 1984 to 1985. I was president of the National Bar Association from 1983 to '84, left that and went into the State Bar of Michigan.

Lynn Jondahl: Okay.

Dennis Archer: And then ultimately, in 2002, after I stepped down from being mayor in December 31 of 2001, in February of 2002, I was nominated to become president elect of the American Bar Association, was so elected in August of that year, and then 2003, 2004, I was president of the American Bar.

Lynn Jondahl: How did you wind up in the state Supreme Court? You mentioned you had met and got to know Jim Blanchard. He then became governor. You first met him when you were working on the Austin campaign and he was working on the Kelley campaign.

Dennis Archer: Met him and was really delighted with what I saw in his energy and the like. There were a lot of things that I thought were compatible about both of us. And we sort of remained in touch. And then when I heard that he was thinking about running for Congress, I volunteered. I mean, wasn't in my city, but I volunteered because I liked and respected who Jim Blanchard was, what I thought he was doing, and he was someone in my view that was a role model for a lot of folks, including me. And he's somebody who's now running for and has a real good shot at being elected as a United States Congressman at a very young age.

Dennis Archer: He got elected. And still stayed in touch and I maintained my interest in Democratic politics in terms of helping other candidates run. I was helpful to Blair Moody the first time he ran and then lost and then ran and won. When former governor G. Mennen Williams announced that he was gonna run, I

helped when he was being nominated by the party and then helped after his election. Thomas Giles Kavanagh. I just enjoyed helping candidates.

Lynn Jondahl: These were all volunteer?

Dennis Archer: Always, yeah.

Dennis Archer: John Conyers. And I ran former Judge George Crockett's campaign, I was his campaign manager, when he ran to replace Charles Diggs after Congressman Diggs had his challenges and opened up the seat. And so I ran his campaign.

Dennis Archer: I ran Mayor Coleman Young's first reelection campaign. The campaign director was Bob Millender and he asked me to be the campaign manager.

Lynn Jondahl: I think I didn't know that until yesterday. I had not connected you with the Coleman Young campaign. It was his first reelection campaign?

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Dennis Archer: Because Bob ran his campaign in 1973 but interestingly enough I was running Ed Bell's campaign for mayor in 1973. We all thought that because there was a state law, state statute, that said that if you were a member of the judiciary or if you were a member of the legislature, while if you were in the House you could run for Senator, if you're in the Senate, you could run for House, but if you ran for an office outside of that, you had to resign one year before the primary election. Same thing if you were a judge, you wanted to run for something outside of the judiciary, you'd have to resign and then run to be eligible to run.

Dennis Archer: And so there was just no way that Coleman Young who didn't announce, was going to be able to run. And so there were a lot of us who wanted to make a statement. We thought the city of Detroit, while it was still very largely majority white as a city, that we thought the time was ripe for a person of color that could run and win. And we spent a year preparing. We went to different cities around the country. I remember going and meeting briefly with Mayor Sam Massell in Atlanta, spent a lot of time with Maynard Jackson, who was the vice mayor. Went out to San Francisco to meet with Mayor Alioto's folks. Went to a couple other cities to take a look at what they were doing and how they were solving and dealing with their various problems.

Dennis Archer: And so when the campaign started, we announced that we were off and running and we were making good progress. And then the Michigan Supreme Court, led by an opinion of Chief Justice John Swainson.

Lynn Jondahl: Who brought the challenge?

Dennis Archer: I think Bob Millander and Coleman Young made the challenge. And they knocked the statute out because it was too late at that time for him to run,

knocked the statute out, he ran, and of course we got our clocks cleaned, Ed Bell and us. And I remember walking behind somebody's home out in Palmer Woods and here I am, a rookie, trying to deal with Bob Millendar and Coleman Young and I'm there with Ed Bell trying to talk them out of, "I know you can run but why don't you not? We've been doing this. We've been covering so many blocks. We've been passing out literature. We've been there. Can't we work it out?"

Dennis Archer: And they were very polite and said, "No."

Dennis Archer: And so then when the primary was over, it was between the Chief of Police, John Nichols, and State Senator Coleman Young, who I had a lot of respect for and admired and might have gone the other way if I'd been asked by him earlier, if I knew he was going to run. But it turned out that after the primary, Ed Bell got very deeply involved in the campaign and helped Coleman Young and I was glad to volunteer. And they became best of friends.

Dennis Archer: And after he first got into office, I got an appointment from Mayor Coleman Young to be on the taxicab commission. We would take a look at the rates that taxicab drivers could charge and I remember doing a lot of reading, asked a lot of questions about the drop rate and, you know. Today I look at the drop rate when I get in the cabs around the country and I won't even use, you know, like sometimes you go to some hotels and you are going back to the airport and the hotel, "Well, we got this car." I say, "I'd rather be in a taxi."

Dennis Archer: In any event, the point is that Bob Millander asked if I would be the campaign manager and I said yes. And it was another excellent opportunity to learn from a person who I deeply respected as an outstanding strategist.

Lynn Jondahl: Now who was the opponent that time for reelection?

Dennis Archer: Ernie Brown.

Lynn Jondahl: Who had been on the city council.

Dennis Archer: Member of city council. And the strategy from the Brown campaign was, here's somebody who is polished, who'd been from the business community, who understood the city, who was on city council, and here's somebody who's brash, who's taken on the police department, taking on other kinds of things.

Dennis Archer: And I suggested to Bob Millander a strategy that would undermine and cut the legs out of everything they were trying to do in terms of making him sort of like the well-established, polished person and someone who didn't relate to everybody. And by the time we got through, Mayor Coleman Young was walking on water, swimming and did not get wet, and we just rolled over and he won reelection.

Lynn Jondahl: Well you suffered or got the same rap, did you not, when you were running for mayor?

Dennis Archer: I was different.

Lynn Jondahl: By some of the younger up and comers who were saying you were too much establishment?

Dennis Archer: Well there was some of that. It basically boiled down to what I thought was the most appropriate approach to win, because if I was gonna win, I wanted to win on my terms and I wanted to win on a strategy that I thought would help this city overcome the challenges that it was facing.

Dennis Archer: And so while I was on the Michigan Supreme Court, I was encouraged by a number of people to consider resigning and run for the office of mayor.

Lynn Jondahl: Now you been appointed.

Dennis Archer: I was appointed by Jim Blanchard. Let's go back to that for a moment.

Lynn Jondahl: Okay.

Dennis Archer: When the first Chrysler crisis hit and chairman and CEO Lee Iacocca was reaching out and needing help to get the appropriate financing for Chrysler for the bailout, there was Don Riegle in the Senate.

Lynn Jondahl: Congressman from the Senate at that time?

Dennis Archer: Yes.

Lynn Jondahl: Had been Congressman from Flint?

Dennis Archer: And he switched parties from Republican to Democrat.

Dennis Archer: And then there was Senator Carl Levin and in the House, the real leader there was none other than Jim Blanchard. And I'm saying to myself, my goodness, look at this. And we'd had a long time serving governor, William G. Milliken who, despite the Democrats' best efforts with candidates like Sandy Levin, who now is in the United States House and is just a phenomenal Congressman. Bill Fitzgerald, who's Senate majority leader, great guy, wonderful person, but so was G. Mennen Williams.

Dennis Archer: And he and Mayor Young got along exceedingly well. There was some belief or some kind of myth that the mayor was really not enthusiastically involved to defeat him when it came time for the governor's race.

Lynn Jondahl: Now you say, "Myth"?

Dennis Archer: Myth. I'll just leave it at that.

Lynn Jondahl: You think it's a myth?

Dennis Archer: I'll just leave it at that.

Lynn Jondahl: Oh, okay.

Dennis Archer: In any event, they got along exceedingly well because Governor Milliken understood what was needed to be done and how to move the legislature to be of help to the city of Detroit. And even at a time when some legislators, frankly, ran not against their opponent but they ran against the City of Detroit, or ran against Mayor Young. And Governor Milliken had always found a way for the two of them, and so did the mayor, for them to communicate. To talk about issues, to get things done. And if you think back from my point of view, just as an aside, the worst thing that ever happened to the state of Michigan was term limits, because it took away institutional memory and knowledge, et cetera. And you had, unlike we see in today's times, in the last several years, where people could not get along and trade votes and do that kind of thing.

Dennis Archer: And so, when Governor Milliken indicated that he was not going to run again, there were a lot of people who were thinking about lining up and running for that seat. A lot of outstanding folks, some of whom were in Congress as well. I went to Jim and said, I think you ought to go. I remember being at an event in the Ren Cen at some dinner. And we just happened to be at the same table. I said, why don't you go? You can make this. You can do this. I'm sure he did it because others higher up than me would suggest it. But he then ran, and I helped him win. And he did an outstanding job as governor of the state of Michigan.

Dennis Archer: And, I was fortunate enough, if you might recall, Mr. Justice Jim Ryan was interested in, and was nominated by the President, and confirmed by the United States Senate to serve on the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. To leave the Michigan Supreme Court, which left a vacancy. And I was finishing up as president of the State Bar of Michigan. Had gone all around. And there were those who were suggesting that I might be an ideal candidate to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court.

Lynn Jondahl: To fill the Ryan vacancy.

Dennis Archer: Yes. It was just a short term, for one year. Because the election was in 1986.

Lynn Jondahl: Oh, you had to immediately then run. You were appointed, and then you had to immediately run because your appointment just lasted through his term.

Dennis Archer: And we had not had a person of color on the Michigan Supreme Court since Otis Smith, who was a very, very brilliant scholarly lawyer, who lost to Thomas



Brennan, who was on the Wayne County Circuit Court. And as the story goes, as he shared with me, he was out mowing grass and he was called by the party and asked, can we put your name in to run against Otis Smith? And he said, yes. And, I don't know how quickly, but he said yes. He was nominated. He beat Otis Smith.

Dennis Archer: And back in 1967, United States Senator Phil Hart had the dilemma of who to choose to appoint to the Eastern District of Michigan. Would it be lawyer Damon J. Keith, or former Supreme Court Justice, former auditor, whatever. There was another office that Otis had served in, and did a remarkable job. And Phil Hart chose Damon Keith.

Dennis Archer: Of course, that was not, I don't think, a real tough loss. And here's what I mean. Otis Smith, because of his tremendous talent and wisdom, and a great lawyer, was chosen by General Motors to become the first African American general counsel of a Fortune 500 company. The largest company in the world. And he did a remarkable job. So both Damon Keith and Otis Smith did remarkable work in providing role models. You couldn't ask for better people.

Dennis Archer: But when the opportunity came about, I was asked if I would be willing to serve as a member of the Michigan Supreme Court. And I said yes. And Governor Blanchard made that appointment or nomination in November of 1985. And when Mr. Justice Jim Ryan transferred over after the first of the year to the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, I was sworn in.

Lynn Jondahl: So you experienced appointment initially, and then immediately ran. The ongoing debate, as current as this year when Justice Ryan and Justice Kelly convened a judicial selection reform committee. The debate has been ongoing about appointment versus election. How should we select Supreme Court justices? Do you feel strongly about that?

Dennis Archer: I will tell you, I can understand why both would come down with the recommendation that their task force came up with. I understand it because, when I ran, for example, I think we raised about \$350,000.

Lynn Jondahl: Tell us the year again.

Dennis Archer: 1986.

Lynn Jondahl: 86.

Dennis Archer: Dean Rob raised about \$450,000. Dean Rob was the other Democratic nominee.

Lynn Jondahl: He was an attorney in the upper part of the state.

Dennis Archer: Traverse City.

Lynn Jondahl: Traverse City. Okay.

Dennis Archer: Then they had former United States Senator Robert Griffin. Then there was Judge Mackenzie who was on the circuit. There was 24 of us who were running for two spots. And I had great people helping me, and because I'd been around the state as State Bar President speaking in different bars. I had the Bar Association, not bars. Bar Associations. That helped me a great deal.

Dennis Archer: And despite that, there was not any acrimony between the candidates. Now I will say that when I first got appointed, that the Michigan Chamber of Commerce took issue with my candidacy, because I came from a plaintiff's law firm. Charfoos, Christensen and Archer. And they felt that I would be too liberal, too this, too that and the other.

Dennis Archer: But there was a person that I had met and come to know, and thus he knew me, by the name of Richard Van Deusen. Who was a former partner in Dickinson Wright, where I was ultimately a partner in, in the scheme of things. And Richard Van Deusen was also chair of the Detroit Chamber of Commerce. And because he knew me, he invited me to come up to the Mackinaw Policy Conference. I was given an opportunity to speak before a plenary session.

Lynn Jondahl: That conference could be characterized as the business retreat annually of Detroit and corporate businesses.

Dennis Archer: Yes. And that was something, by the way, I became chair of. The Detroit Regional Chamber, 2006-2007, after I left office as mayor. But Richard Van Deusen gave me an opportunity to come before the Detroit Regional Chamber. And I was able to, through him and through the chamber, meet a lot of different business organizations. And they were satisfied, I gathered, that I was safe, I was okay, and they could get behind it. So I was able to win. And I won an eight year seat.

Dennis Archer: And what we experienced in this city, businesses leaving the city, you might recall back then, it was jackets and gym shoes that kids were fighting over. Some were being killed over, to take their jackets and gym shoes. Certain style of jackets, certain style of gym shoes. And so, I was asked, would you consider running?

Dennis Archer: I really enjoyed being a member of the Michigan Supreme Court. I served with Mr. Chief Justice G. Mennen Williams, and Jim Brickley, who's a former lieutenant governor. And by the way, Jim Brickley was the one who, when he was running for governor, you might recall, he tried to advance and get petitions signed to appoint, for whoever the governor would be. To appoint the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, education posts, et cetera. Because you know, U of M, Michigan State, Wayne State, State Board, you run, and nominated by your respective parties. And so, he tried to get signatures, and he couldn't do it.

Didn't win the election, but then he was appointed. And won, or was appointed to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Dennis Archer: And to go back to your original question in terms of Justice Ryan and Justice Kelly and their views, Governor John Engler was in a position to appoint a number of justices because of vacancies on the Michigan Supreme Court. And he did that. And they had a uniform, it was believed or observed or documented, whatever myth or whatever the case may be, that they had a philosophical belief that was anti-plaintiff. Pro-business. And there were a number of cases that came before them that, in their view, on the basis of the facts and the law, that decisions were made. And when you look at the decisions, the decision was consistent with a pro-business point of view, and an anti-plaintiff point of view.

Dennis Archer: And so we finally got, in the state of Michigan, to the point where there was, I believe, three who were running for election at the same time. It just turned out, it happened to be that way. Somebody was short term, or fill in the vacancy. And then two who were running, I think, for a full term of office. And they were all nominated by their party, the Republican party. They had three candidates from the Democratic party that ran against each other. And I think \$12 million plus were spent, a lesser amount by the individual candidates themselves. But the business community was huge, because they saw the advantage of having people who they felt understood their point of view, and was in the best interest of the state of Michigan. And so they raised a lot of money, and supported the three. And the ads.

Lynn Jondahl: So this was a PAC supported by the business community, but it was not a PAC administered or supported by the candidate, him or herself.

Dennis Archer: That's exactly right.

Lynn Jondahl: It was independent.

Dennis Archer: Independent. And the same as it relates to the Democratic candidates. And those who raised money supporting the Democratic candidates, the PACs, they had some real interesting ads. I can still remember to this day one ad talking about, don't worry about it, what are we going to do about the insurance? Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. We've got three. And you'd see the animation of three people jumping up and down, and going in, pulling out money, and all that kind of stuff where they were supposedly being paid. And it was a vitriolic, very nasty campaign.

Dennis Archer: The three Republicans won. And then it was about that time that I was coming in as President Elect of the American Bar. And the then President of the American Bar asked if I would meet with, because they had an initiative, let's tone down the nastiness of the elections. We had a meeting here at Wayne State University, called in both the Republican and Democratic state party chairs

to see if we could not get an agreement to reduce the negativity and the like. Because it's not only here in Michigan. It's in Texas, all over the place.

Dennis Archer: It was, it seemed like it was just something that everybody was doing. And it was not good for the rule of law. It was not good for the respect of the judiciary. And I will tell you that I was very pleased with what I saw here in Michigan. They toned it down. Then it popped back up again.

Dennis Archer: And so that's why I believe that the two justices, and their commission, and by the way, the commission was made up also of plaintiff and defense lawyers who also agreed. So it was bipartisan across the board, philosophically balanced and the like and they came to that conclusion. I remember, however, a person that I considered to be not only a mentor but a friend, Mr. Chief Justice G. Mennen Williams. Was always of the opinion that the voters better understood what they felt was important than anybody else. And therefore, he was ultimately opposed to taking away that vote of the people.

Lynn Jondahl: It seems to me, injecting my own perspective, that you get, or are more likely to get, public ownership of the system of jurisprudence if there is an elected judiciary. At least there's that opportunity. If somehow we can communicate with people and answer the questions they need to have answered, that these ads don't characterize the system. I don't know how you do that. It's naïve to say let's be nice and stay on point. But doesn't election provide greater ownership, at least, of the system.

Dennis Archer: Using your word, I think it provides the opportunity. In reality, our media press, both TV, written print, et cetera, has never really provided an opportunity to appreciate and know the candidates, where they are, what they stand for. And to elevate in the minds of our voters, how important the judiciary happens to be.

Dennis Archer: And how what makes this country, frankly, so different and so much greater than everybody else is the respect for the rule of law and democracy. Madame Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, in an opinion, I'll paraphrase, simply said that the United States Supreme Court does not have an army to enforce it's opinions. We count upon the citizens to respect the rule of law.

Dennis Archer: Well, the people who best share with the public how to respect the rule of law. And if you disagree with a decision made by any court, whether it's in the state of Michigan, the Michigan Supreme Court, or the United States Supreme Court, is to go either to the House and Senate of your state, or House and Senate of the federal government, and seek relief, et cetera. Since that is not something that is available, and because judges can't give, and frankly, neither can members of the Senate or the House, they can't give people jobs. It's not patronage. And they can't appoint people to do things as a president or a governor or a mayor can do. And so, the only thing that lawyers can do, or judges running for office can do, is to say, I will be fair and impartial.

Dennis Archer: And if asked, if the issue of abortion comes up, how would you rule? I'm sorry. I can't answer that question, because if I do, the other side would be able to file a motion asking me to recuse, or remove myself from that decision process, because I have a preconceived notion about how the outcome should come. And so I can't answer that question. Then there was a United States Supreme Court case, I think it was either Wisconsin, Minnesota, I think it was the White case, I think. The Supreme Court said you could respond in certain instances. But even though the United States Supreme Court said you can do it, most do not.

Dennis Archer: And so I come back to this. Until the media gives full attention to the office and what that office does and can do, whether it's probate, circuit, district court, the Michigan Supreme Court, court of appeals. Until they help educate. And the Bar Association tries to do it. And frankly, more lawyers than anybody else have an interest in who's serving on the bench, because lawyers have a chance to know who that person is, what they're about. So that most elections in our state, as far as the judiciary is concerned and it's more for the Supreme Court than court of appeals, circuit, et cetera. Whoever heads the ticket in the state, if that person, whatever party or persons, whatever party, wins that state, they carry with them the educational board seats, and they also carry with them whoever's running generally for the Michigan Supreme Court.

Dennis Archer: Now, every incumbent in this last election for example, Mr. Justice Markman, Mr. Justice Zahra, they had what is called the incumbency designation. Meaning, under their names, if they timely filed and everybody does, whether you're running for district court, et cetera. You're able to list your office. And so in this case, under Mr. Justice Markman or Mr. Justice Zahra, would be Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. There was another, in effect, open seat. No one who was nominated by the Republican or the Democratic party had any designation under them.

Dennis Archer: And so, with one of the best campaigners in this state that I know, United States Senator Debbie Stabenow being at the head of the ticket, along with a person who was running for reelection, and who had been very helpful to the automotive industry and others who benefited by decisions of him being President of the United States, you had a very good campaigner in President Barack Obama. They led the ticket. And when they led the ticket, all of those persons nominated by the Democratic Party, for the State Board of Ed, Board of Governors at Wayne, Board of Regents at University of Michigan, Board of Trustees at Michigan State, they all won. And so did Bridget Mary McCormick, a person nominated by the Democratic party.

Lynn Jondahl: One of the things that the task force that former Justice Ryan and Justice Kelly chaired, one of the things they came out for very strongly was, in an elective system such as we have, we would benefit greatly from a diverse not only attorneys, but more broadly based laypeople as well. Call them screening committees and so on. You had experience, you said, in the Bar Association role

of screening. How do you react to that recommendation of a more broad based group of people who look at potential candidates?

Dennis Archer: I think if you were going to that approach, I think that's very helpful. I think if you take a look at what occurs in Michigan for a vacancy in our federal courts, in our trial courts, if there's a United States Senator of the same party as the President, then in this case, Carl Levin. Carl Levin, as the United States Senator, will form a commission. And that committee or commission would first review all of the applications.

Dennis Archer: Then from the applications they would determine how many they want to interview. And from those who are interviewed, they will recommend two names for every vacancy that's there. In this case, we now have two vacancies coming up on the eastern district. Judge Battani and Judge Edmunds have chosen to go senior status. So it opens up two vacancies. So there will be four people probably recommended to Senator Levin, who also, because he believes in doing it, sharing the input with Senator Debbie Stabenow. Then they'll make a recommendation to the president.

Dennis Archer: And that works, and it works well. And I will tell you, one of the things that I learned being chair of the Judicial Qualifications Committee of the State Bar, and that is, when you fill out a very long, intensive application. One that I had to do myself when I was nominated by Governor Blanchard. I had to fill it out, disclose everything. And then you put down who you would choose as references, if the committee chooses to call somebody. Folks would put down names of folks that they thought would be very supportive, never called them, apparently. And lawyers are very honest in this extent. They want somebody on the bench who will do a very fine job, and be fair, et cetera. So if they know, if that lawyer, if you list him as a reference and you call that person.

Dennis Archer: Say I ask you in confidence, this person being considered for this position, et cetera. What do you think about their work habits, et cetera et cetera. If they know anything that is negative, they will lay it out, and it will come out. So, my exposure in terms of seeing that done first hand is that it works.

Lynn Jondahl: You went from the court to civilian life for a couple of years. Did you go from the court to run for mayor. Was that in your thinking, that time?

Dennis Archer: It wasn't my thinking. I really enjoyed public service. For those of us who are long in the tooth, like my friend Mr. Justice, Mr. Chief Justice, G. Mennen Williams or Judge Damon Keith and so many others that I've met. For us, some of us the practice of law or being a lawyer sometimes is called a public service. I enjoyed serving on the Michigan Supreme Court. It was a great collegial bonding. When I left the court Madam Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley was our chief justice. I got along well with all of the members of the court.

Dennis Archer: And I enjoyed being one of seven serving the people of the state of Michigan but I kept reading about kids at that time, who were injuring and sometimes even killing other kids over jackets and gym shoes. And then about the businesses that were leaving the city of Detroit. About crime as it was starting to edge up. I felt that I could probably make a difference if somehow I was successful to run and then win. But I also felt that in order to run I would need to resign from the Michigan Supreme Court because of the provision that had not been overturned for judges one. But two, I wanted to ask everybody "What do you want? What do you expect from the next mayor, whoever it is?" And I found that, and thought that if I needed to ask business people that question, in many instances while the business people I would speak to about that question would not be ever before the court, their companies would be.

Dennis Archer: And there is a higher ethical standard for those of us who serve on the bench, it's called a judicial cannons. And we have to avoid even the appearance of impropriety and so I resigned from the Michigan Supreme Court. And I went to the University of Michigan to meet with President Jim Duderstadt. I could've gone to Wayne but I just felt that, I assumed that I was gonna be running against the Mayor. And I assumed that his appointees, who serve in different departments, would make it tough on anybody who would support someone who was gonna run against the Mayor. So I went to the University of Michigan and I asked if he could ask members of his staff, not his staff but professors, that might have an interest in working with me to see if we couldn't find the answers to about six or seven different questions.

Dennis Archer: And I couldn't promise him that I was going to run, but if I did run I would certainly acknowledge the help that I received from the University and the individual professors who helped. And he came back to me with some names and I used a term that I learned from working on the Law School Accreditation Committee in the section of legal education and admission to the Bar. They became in effect my laboring orth. They were able to encourage people from other cities who had similar challenges as we did in Michigan, while I was able to go to members of our community here in the neighborhood. I could ask them "What would you want done?" I mean without sounding too glib, any fool could tell you what the problems were. I wanted some solutions because I wanted the people of this city to know that if they voted for me, here is where I want to go, here's where I'd like to take us. And so we answered six questions.

Dennis Archer: Another person who was very helpful to me, was Phil Power. Phil's wife, God rest her soul, was very instrumental and very helpful to me when I ran for to keep my seat on the Michigan Supreme Court. Sarah was just outstanding. And I met Phil then.

Lynn Jondahl: Now Sarah was, was she on the Board of Regions?

Dennis Archer: I think she was at time.

Lynn Jondahl: Sarah Power.

Dennis Archer: Yeah. But she was just a very knowledgeable warm person. And wanted to be of help and I needed all the help that I could get, because remember when you look at the city of Detroit, that's one thing in terms of people of color. You take a look at the state, our numbers are very small and deminimus at the time. And so I went to Phil and said "Here's what I'm doing and I'd love your help."

Dennis Archer: He said "I can help you this way. You can come and meet in my office." And so we went to the Observer's office, it was on 696 and it was in between Detroit and Ann Arbor. And so that's where we would meet at Phil's office. And we came up with a document that I think was about 56 pages long. We wrote, I had a lot of help. I had help from Netty C. Brooks who was with General Motors at the time, Al Lukerelli who was the managing partner of Ernst and Young who moved here from Atlanta and a friend of mine wanted me to meet him. And also on the court at the time that wanted me to meet him when he came. I was very impressed with him, liked him and his wife a lot. And then Mike Frank who was the executive director State Bar of Michigan.

Dennis Archer: And we finished the document, I sent it out over 1,000 people including Mayor Young. And say here's where I think the city oughta go and let it go. And then I went to the news, The Free Press and The Michigan Chronicle and met with the editors and reporters. And when nobody would step up and say, "I will run," I announced my candidacy. And my announcement had a very huge surprise to it. The huge surprise was the long-time friend and lawyer of the Mayor, George Crocket, standing up saying "I know him, et cetera, and I'm supporting him and I'm calling on my friend Mayor Young not to run again." Turned out that Mayor Young did not run, he supported Art Blackwell in the primary and Sharon McPhail in the general. The knock on me was from that quarter, was that because I believed in building bridges.

Dennis Archer: We in the city were going outside the city and spending our money outside because we didn't have, we'd lost all our department stores that we had downtown and the last one from Sachs left from the West Bend Boulevard address up there in Midtown. And we didn't have any department stores, so we'd go outside the city to spend our money. Folks from the suburbs would come in because we had great sporting teams. We had the Tigers and we had the Redwings, the Lions were playing out in Pontiac and the Pistons were out in now Auburn Hills. And they'd come in for the great cultural things that we had DIA, come in for the Art Museum, for the entertainment, we have more theater seats, only the city of New York's got more theater seats than the city of Detroit. That's not a well-known fact but so people come but then they would leave right away and go out.

Dennis Archer: So I wanted to build bridges and I wanted to see if we could get a better transportation system. And we needed jobs but I also knew and believed that the need for jobs doesn't create jobs. Businesses create jobs and thus you've gotta work with business to provide the kind of incentive, motivation, attractiveness about your city to attract business to come in. Turns out that I was fortunate to be elected and nobody gave Detroit a prayer to win the



Empowerment Zone. We won the Empowerment Zone, Governor John Engler saw what the Empowerment Zone was doing, came up with the Renaissance Zones which we utilize to attract business. We use the Smart Zones that he created to attract or to start up what is now Tech Town, where we've got a number of businesses that are developing and the like. And we opened up the door.

Dennis Archer: The knock on me was, I was going to sell the city's jewels. They had me selling the water department they had me selling the DIA et cetera. But after I got in and people saw what I was doing and my intent there was never an issue.

Lynn Jondahl: Right. You had a good time as mayor.

Dennis Archer: We attracted 20.2 billion dollars of new business into this city. We had the Empowerment Zone, the Renaissance Zone, and the other things that we attracted business with. We were written up in the newspapers around the United States, whether it was The Wall Street Journal, New York Times, LA Times, Baltimore papers, Chicago papers. People were talking about the comeback city. I mean we had new development downtown, we had two ball parks, we had three temporary casinos, we had new housing going up. We had a Tech Town because General Motors, when they moved away from their Fleetwood Cadillac plant, developed an area, cleaned it out so that we could add new businesses out there and these businesses a number of 'em, were businesses owned by people of color. And just created new jobs. Vinny Johnson was hiring people and got 'em off the welfare rolls. A lot of different kinds of things. Same thing with John James everybody participated.

Dennis Archer: In the Empowerment Zone are financial institutions, which when I was running for mayor, a number of businesses, especially businesses of color would say "Banks won't loan us money." So I went to Detroit Renaissance and said "Would you all come up with a 50 million dollar fund, that you can take an equity position in and then whatever you wanna do, but make sure that capital is available for businesses of color?"

Lynn Jondahl: As venture money.

Dennis Archer: As to support loans et cetera that they needed to grow their business. The financial institutions led by Brenda Snyder, who was a Vice President of Comerica Bank at that time, they came up with 1.2, I think, 1.2 billion dollars that committed to lend over ten years. The automotives, Ford, Chrysler, General Motors, said "We will commit to provide six million dollars worth of new business of ten years." The first call I got was from my man Bobby, who was the chairman and CEO of Chrysler. He called me from Argentina and said "Mr. Mayor would you be interested in having a 750 million dollar engine plant?" Yes! Absolutely. I mean I was excited about it. And another plant, General Motors followed. Ford Motor Company got involved through Wayne Doran in terms of causing some business to happen with John James.

Dennis Archer: And then the voters of the state of Michigan said they would entrust the city of Detroit to have up to three privately owned casinos. We were able to get a new baseball stadium that, thanks to the voters and others, that provided a new baseball stadium for our Tigers to play in called Comerica Park. And then Bill Ford who I had met with and Bill Ford was the person who was assigned to work with the city of Detroit by the chairman and CEO of Ford Motor Company at the time. He and I would go out and have lunch. I would go out talk to him. He'd come down to Detroit have lunch with me in the little private area that we had in the mayor's office, to talk about the city of Detroit and what the Ford Motor Company could do and other things and the like.

Dennis Archer: And I got a call from him one day and he said "Mr. Mayor I'm having a tough time with trying to work out something fair and reasonable with the city of Pontiac. If we can't work it out, would you be interested in having the Detroit Lions come back to the city of Detroit?"

Dennis Archer: Yes! I was at it again. And so we wound up with the two stadiums. And then I had a very brilliant, a very brilliant corporate counsel by the name of Phyllis James. Phyllis observed that we had when I was running, that there was a challenge to the market share program, or affirmative action program that Mayor Young had in place. It was working quite well but it was challenged because it did not meet the Richmond versus Croson ruling of the United States Supreme Court, something that Mr. Bradford, William Bradford Reynolds, who was in the justice department under Reagan caused for several cases to be reopened and went before the Supreme Court. He did not meet the tests, so we had no affirmative action program. And you had to meet the disparaged impact initiative to satisfy Richmond versus Croson. And there's no way with a city that had an African American mayor, majority city council African American, all you know department heads across the board. You couldn't make that case.

Dennis Archer: She came up with the fact that there were so many businesses in the city of Detroit, that we came up with an executive order for it. Executive order for requiring all of our city departments to do 30% of their business with Detroit-based businesses because so many of the businesses had left the city of Detroit. Businesses of color had no place to go but to remain here. And so they were able to be very successful in doing a lot of outstanding work. And I can point to a lot of different buildings and things that they were involved in because the two stadium, the Ford family and the Ilitch family, the three different casinos said they would, as did Compuware when they moved into the city of Detroit, said they would come, they had adopted an executive order for it. So we had a lot growth during that time.

Dennis Archer: We were looked as a comeback city. We had a federal government with President Bill Clinton, Vice President Gore, with people like Robert Reuben and Henry Ciseneros and Gene Sperling who were strong advocates, along with Henry Ciseneros for cities. And so they had a program and approach because Governor Clinton had met with the US Conference of Mayors to understand what the cities needed. So he provided tools for a hand up rather than a hand

out to allow cities to start doing things to help themselves. And I would take advantage of every Cops program, Cops program was grants that would be available to hire police officers. And you had to commit to keep them on. And so after the money for them you know ran out.

Dennis Archer: We had a reduction of crime every year that I was mayor. We've balanced the budget every year. We had a modest rainy day fund every year. And so we made a lot of changes but I will tell you it takes a lot out of you. I was spending 16-18 hour days. I'd go on vacation just to sort of think fast forward, or look backward. When I became mayor for example, we didn't have computers in our office. We had rotary dial telephones and so when I went on vacation I would have a portable fax machine, I'd have a pager, a cellphone and a laptop, to try and stay in touch with the office. And I had to come back a couple of times.

Dennis Archer: I came back because there was, we got down to short strokes and we need an agreement between the Ilitch's and the Fords to put something on the Wayne county ballot and it had to be done by a certain time, so I came back from vacation to do that. I came back because of school strike and I wanted to get our kids back in school as soon as possible so I left vacation. Those are the kind of things that you do and then you regrettably you also have threats against your life and against your family's life because of the things that you do.

Dennis Archer: The toughest thing that I ever had to do as mayor, just as an aside, was going to the hospital and meeting with the families of the police officers who were injured or killed in the line of duty. And then go to their funerals and to speak and to see their children and their family out there in front of you. It was, I could never get through without showing a sense of emotion, those kinds of things.

Lynn Jondahl: The perception of you, and I appreciate the insight you've given us, the perception by the name droppers, political name droppers and so on, was that you should be thinking about becoming governor or you should be thinking about becoming a member of the cabinet, the Clinton cabinet or something. I think because you made yourself present, you were there. You were involved with people at the state and federal level on behalf of the city. Were those ever attractive ideas or options?

Dennis Archer: There were options. Right after President Clinton won reelection, I was called by a cabinet officer and talked to me about three different cabinet positions. And I said "Thank you, but I haven't finished my first term as mayor. My commitment is to the city. I still wanna be and will be supportive of the president whatever he does, but I gotta stay with my city." So I turned down those opportunities and as it relates to the Office of Governor, after I left the Mayor's Office, numbers were still high in terms of favorability. And when it was clear that the Governor was term-limited, and I'm talking about Governor Granholm, I was asked by a number of close friends, that had been very supportive of me when I was mayor, if I would look at the office of Governor. And I thought about it, and I said I'll look. I had in mind that there were 35 different meetings as I penciled

down that I wanted to have. And it was so early it allowed me to do what was important to me.

Dennis Archer: I wanted to meet with these groups to ask them, I said, "I'm coming to you, I wanna know what you think. I wanna know what you want or expect from the next governor."

Lynn Jondahl: Building the similar kind of lead up you did as you were looking at becoming mayor?

Dennis Archer: And so I would meet and ask them questions. They were shocked that someone would come and ask them what they thought because typically when people come to meet with them, they come and say "I'm running for this and I would like your support and here's what I want from you et cetera." When I walked away from those meetings, I got the support and stuff that I wasn't even asking for but there were commitments. Because they appreciated somebody who thought enough and respected them enough that they would ask them what they thought. And after I'd gone through about 20 meetings, there was something else in the back of my mind to be very candid. I love this state. This is a very outstanding unique state, made up of a lot of different wonderful people, lot of different backgrounds.

Dennis Archer: While we had state-wide elected officers of color, myself being one on the Supreme Court, Conrad Mallett who followed, Bob Young who followed. We've had outstanding folks like Richard Austin and others who've been elected to office, we've never had a governor. Or a person of color win this state. When President Barack Obama became President and won the state of Michigan that took away any need for me to say another word or do anything. The other thing that scared me to death was, if I ran I thought I might have a good shot at winning the Democratic nomination. I had a very good working relationship with labor. Steve Yokich, Ron Gilfinger.

Lynn Jondahl: Presidents of UAW.

Dennis Archer: President Jim Hoffa, Bill Black, the folks with SEIU and AFSCME et cetera, I had a good working relationship. I mean I always had a open door policy when I was mayor. But I was a very strong mayor in terms of I wasn't going to give away the store.

Lynn Jondahl: Yes.

Dennis Archer: But I also had a working relationship with business because we need business to create the jobs. It's so important and you've gotta have that working relationship. I would meet with the Detroit Renaissance almost monthly. I would meet quarterly, and you know, I had to encourage them to meet the Detroit Regional Chamber because I wanted to know what they were thinking. I wanted them to know what we were trying to do. And they were very helpful in getting

things done. And we worked together. So I had a good working relationship but the thing that scared me to death is what if I won. And I'm not saying that just in terms of being cocky or anything. But I will tell you, the difference between being mayor and being governor is, I mean I worked 16-17 hours a day but I could always get home at night. In our state, we've got areas of our state that it takes you 12 hours to drive to. And you say "Well why don't you fly?" Because voters want you to sacrifice and to not appear to be taking advantage of things. If you remember, Governor Engler winning that last election took that nickel, had his mother come on at the end, after the campaign going back and forth. And he's talking about "I'm gonna get rid of the airplanes et cetera."

Dennis Archer: I couldn't get home at night. I mean so I would always wanna be the kind of governor, if I ran and won if somebody was having a problem in Marquette or Port Huron or Cassopolis or anyplace in Michigan. If I thought the Governor's Office could be of help, I would wanna be there and I couldn't get home at night. And I had two, have two right now outstanding grandchildren, four and seven. I don't wanna give that up. And I enjoy what I'm doing so I announced that I looked at it, I was satisfied that somebody could win it that was a Democrat but it was not gonna be me. So I didn't run. I will also tell you that I was asked by the Obama administration to consider the position.

Dennis Archer: And I thanked him very much and said, "No, I want to be able to help him get re-elected in 2012." And then this year, I was asked if I wanted to do something, and it was exciting to do, been a lot of fun to do it. I said, "I would rather wait and let him choose somebody else, because it's important to me that he be re-elected."

Dennis Archer: Not everybody who is a president gets re-elected. And it was important for me that the first person of color who won the privilege and the right to be President of the United States, that he be re-elected.

Dennis Archer: I mean, when you start thinking about how children can look at this person on television, children who are not getting a good education, maybe not motivated to get a good education, that their mothers, and grandmothers, and aunts, and uncles, and others can say, "Do you know who that is? That's the President of the United States. You can be President of the United States."

Dennis Archer: There are intangibles, but they are important intangibles. Enough so that I wanted to make sure that I did whatever I could to get him re-elected. So I said, "I'll pass. If you want me to do it next time, I'll be glad to do it. But right now, I want to get him re-elected."

Lynn Jondahl: So, in essence, a second term became almost more important than the first, for the president?

Dennis Archer: Because if he was not re-elected, I mean, I don't care who the president is. President Ronald Reagan was elected twice, and you've had George Herbert

Walker Bush, was not re-elected. Then you had his son, who was re-elected twice. And you had Jimmy Carter re-elected, but was not re-elected.

Dennis Archer: I did not want any negativity going to the president. And to say, "You can't elect somebody like that because" And so, that was very important. Plus, frankly, he was doing a great job, in my view, and I thought he really meant what he said. He wanted to work across the aisle. But it takes two people to work across the aisle. But he keeps trying.

Lynn Jondahl: I want to thank you for having spent this time with us. You've been very gracious with your time, and your insights, and your candor. Appreciate this opportunity to talk to you. I hope we've given people a chance to know you better. I certainly feel that that has happened here.

Dennis Archer: Well, Lynn, thank you very much, and I want to thank former Governor Blanchard, and our former ambassador to Canada, and my friend, for thinking about doing something like this, and causing you, of all great people, to be the interviewer. You have a tremendous track record of your own, and you also have a reputation that you, once leaving office, of reaching out and wanting to create a bipartisan kind of atmosphere where you have actually taught and influenced a lot of young people, who are not young today, but you taught a lot of young people to think about running for office. Because it's so important that they run for office, and it is important that they appreciate the world of politics. So, let me thank you for being the interviewer, for coming out.

Lynn Jondahl: Thank you much.